

TheCarolinaChannel.com

New Program Gives Education Future To Parolees

G.E.D. Students Get Chance At Free Tuition

POSTED: 6:45 p.m. EST November 25, 2003

UPDATED: 6:53 p.m. EST November 25, 2003

GREENVILLE, S.C. -- South Carolina jails currently hold 22,000 people while the state's Department of Probation Parole and Pardon Services supervises another 50,000.

Now, a new partnership between the state and Greenville Technical College might keep some of those offenders from crossing the legal line again.

Ben Morton, 29, is a husband and father, a man with a promising future and a checkered past.

He'll spend the next 18 months on probation.

Corrections officials also call Morton an educational success.

After dropping out of school in the seventh grade, he got a general education diploma and is now ready for college classes.

"For once, I did the right thing and went back to school," Morton told News 4's Gordon Dill.

His success comes from participating in a program that may work for hundreds of other offenders attending Greenville Tech.

"There are so many opportunities out there," said another G.E.D. student, Dana Hale. "I'm real set on getting my G.E.D. right now. I'm not real sure what I want to do after I do get (it) but I am in this for the long run."

About 3,500 people are currently on probation or parole in Greenville County.

Once enrolled in G.E.D. classes, convicts can then sign up at Greenville County Square for a special opportunity.

If selected, Greenville Tech will waive tuition for 100 students in G.E.D. classes.

The idea, according to Greenville Tech administrators, is to help the offenders make more money to pay restitution, making taxpayers out of tax burdens and

giving old offenders a new option.

"You gotta quit making the same old mistakes and move on, you know?" Morton told Dill.

Now that he has his G.E.D., the next place he'll serve time is college.

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